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ABSTRACT

This guide defines the objectives and procedures of the United States Department of Education's Joint Dissemination Review Panel (JDRP) and the National Diffusion Network (NDN). The authors discuss the JDRP's methods of identifying successful educational programs and informing other schools nationwide about them. The major questions asked about programs are covered here, as are the general procedures of considering the merits of programs submitted, including the clerical details of program submissions, activities during and after a JDRP review, and the handling of resubmitted proposals. A section of questions and answers addresses common concerns raised by program developers about the JDRP and the NDN (which provides funding for disseminating information about JDRP-approved programs). A brief annotated bibliography lists related publications, films, and videotapes. (JW)

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HOW TO PREPARE FOR A JOINT DISSEMINATION REVIEW PANEL MEETING

by

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to assist developers of educational programs, education officials, and evaluators to understand the concepts and processes by which the U. S. Department of Education identifies, recognizes, and disseminates high quality educational products or practices through the Joint Dissemination Review Panel and the National Diffusion Network. This paper provides detailed information to these persons in order to help them understand and prepare for the review process. Much of this paper is based on the actual experiences of individuals who have made presentations to the Joint Dissemination Review Panel.

Over the past years, the Federal Government provided funds for the development of many thousands of programs under various education programs starting in the mid 1960s. Some of these programs were highly successful, but they were limited to the schools in which they were developed or to other schools within the same State. Educators outside the State had little or no opportunity to learn about them or to make use of their findings. Consequently, the Federal investment in the programs was never fully realized.

Two needs became evident:

1. A way to identify successful programs.
2. A way to help schools learn about successful programs and adopt the programs for their own use.

The first of these needs was satisfied by creation in 1972 of the Joint Dissemination Review Panel (JDRP).

Often referred to as a "quality control mechanism", the JDRP is a group of U.S. Department of Education employees, experienced in education and evaluation, who carefully review evaluation based data, such as test scores, to determine whether programs should be made available to other schools.

Approval by the JDRP gives a program objective professional recognition and the opportunity to compete for National Diffusion Network (NDN) dissemination funds.

In NDN's first year, 32 locally developed programs were approved by the JDRP and were eligible to apply for NDN dissemination funds. By December 1983, 368 programs, developed in the local schools and other educational agencies in 48 States and the District of Columbia, had "passed" the JDRP and were eligible to apply for NDN funds.

The second need--that of enabling schools to learn about and adopt JDRP-approved programs--is fulfilled by the NDN. It disseminates information about JDRP-approved programs throughout the nation and sets up arrangements by which such programs may be adopted in other schools. The NDN supports two kinds of project grants: Developer Demonstrators (DDs) and State Facilitators (SFs). Developer Demonstrators provide information, training and follow up services to schools interested in adopting their programs,

and Facilitators link up potential users with Developer Demonstrators. There is a State Facilitator in every State, D.C., Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

By providing funds to both DDs and SFs, the NDN assures that local schools or other agencies in any State can draw on quality education projects to solve their education problems. Let's now examine the JDRP in detail.

What Is the Joint Dissemination Review Panel?

The U.S. Department of Education's chief review group, the Joint Dissemination Review Panel (JDRP) rigorously examines evidence from education programs, products or practices that claim significant effectiveness in attaining their goals. Any program or product that the Panel approves has shown that there is objective compelling evidence present to support the claims. The JDRP also recommends national dissemination for all approved programs, products and practices.

The JDRP is composed of 22 to 30 members from the Department's various program offices, chosen for their ability to analyze evaluation-based data for evidence of effectiveness of educational programs. For the purpose of review, seven members of the Panel who are present at the review meeting constitute a quorum. The members are concerned about several key questions, such as:

1. Has a specific positive change occurred? What is the evidence of change? (Examples are: changes in test scores, the durability of the change, the number of students affected by the change, the consistency of positive change, cost savings to the school, changes in attendance records).
2. Can the change be attributed to the program rather than to other causes, such as normal maturation, regular education programs, or other factors?
3. Is the change great enough and observed often enough to be statistically significant?
4. Is the change educationally significant? What is the size of the change and what is the importance of the area in which the change has occurred? Is the cost reasonable, considering the magnitude and area of change?
5. Has the evidence supporting the program's claims been gathered and interpreted correctly?
6. Can the program be used in other locations with comparable impact?

The decision by the program office officials to request a JDRP review is completely voluntary.

General Procedures

A general summary of the program's objectives, claims, methodology, supporting evidence and interpretation, limited to 10 pages, is called a "submittal". An outline of the items needed for the submittal is contained in the JDRP IDEABOOK.¹

There are two procedures for making submittals to the JDRP based on the source of developmental funding. First, if the program, product or practice was developed with U.S. Department of Education funds, the local agency forwards the JDRP submittal to the U. S. Department of Education program office that funded its development.² This program office will pre-review the submittal and assist the local developer throughout the JDRP process. It also serves as sponsor within the Department for the submittals. For example, a program office may help in the preparation of the JDRP submittal, identify specific resources, and provide personal contact within the U.S. Department of Education.

Second, to forward a JDRP submittal on a program that was developed with other Federal, State and local government, or private non-profit organization funds, requires another procedure. The applicant sends the JDRP submittal to the Department's Division of National Dissemination Programs which administers the National Diffusion Network. Personnel from that organization provide the agency submitting the JDRP submittal with technical assistance similar to that provided by the Department's other program funding offices.

Agencies interested in presenting a JDRP submittal should make their intentions known to the appropriate U.S. Department of Education program office as soon as substantial evaluation data are available for review. Some program offices require State approval prior to sending the JDRP submittal to the U.S. Department of Education. Thus, early contact with the program office can save much time, effort, and heartache.

Program Office Pre-reviews

Most program offices have pre-review committees to examine the JDRP submittal. They review carefully each submittal for strengths and weaknesses and initiate communication with the developer concerning it.

If the pre-review indicates that the program is not ready for submission to the Panel, it simply means that the committee believes the program is unlikely to be approved by the JDRP for one or more reasons. The submitter should then review the program records and evaluation data, study the committee's critique, and then make the decision to continue or discontinue the effort to submit to the JDRP.

¹See Appendix: Selected References.

²Because of consolidation of certain programs, the program office that funded the development may no longer exist. In that case developers may send the JDRP submittal to the Division of National Dissemination Programs.

Once the pre-review committee is satisfied with the submittal, a memorandum of transmittal is prepared and signed by the Assistant Secretary of the appropriate program office stating that the submittal has been pre-reviewed, is factually correct, and that the products or practices are socially fair and apparently not harmful. This is the official notification of the program's readiness for presentation to the JDRP by the program office. When this memorandum is signed, it certifies to the JDRP that all stages of development have been completed and that the submitted program is one that the program office believes is ready to be recognized and disseminated widely.

What Are Some Of the Other Nitty-Gritty Details One Should Know?

Fifteen copies of the submittal, the transmittal memorandum, and a brief (125-150 words) summary of the program are forwarded to the JDRP's Executive Secretary, who then schedules the JDRP meeting.

Panel members require a minimum of five working days to review the submittal prior to a meeting. Typically, the Panel will consider three submittals at each meeting, with each submittal receiving an hour or so of the Panel's time. A Department of Education program office staff member represents the program at the meeting. This staff member informs the developer of the time and location of the meeting. Because of the variety of information needed by the Panel members, it is highly recommended that each program send the local program director and program evaluator to accompany the program office staff member at the JDRP meeting. The costs for preparing the submittal, travel, costs, etc. however, must come from the agency and developer making the submittal.

Activities During and After JDRP Review

The bulk of the time in a Panel review is spent on questions and discussions between the Panel, the agency staff, and the developers for clarification and specific information. It should be remembered that the Panel's questions are meant to bring out specific program evaluation details which are valuable in determining program effectiveness and/or value to other educators interested in adopting the program. Implicit is the goal of discovering the positive educational contributions of the submittal which may be present.

It is always helpful for the persons representing the developer (i.e., local program director and/or evaluator) whose submittal will be reviewed, to meet with the Department of Education program office's staff member prior to the JDRP meeting. This meeting need not be long but some last-minute details can be clarified, such as discussing ways to respond to questions relating to the educational significance of the program or reporting on a meeting room change. The review meetings are held in Washington, D.C.

Panels convene in the morning, usually at about 9:30 A.M. Generally the seven Panel members (including the Chairperson) and the developers are seated at tables facing one another. The Panel's Executive Secretary is also present to record the proceedings and to provide technical assistance.

The program office staff members first introduce themselves, the director of the project, and its evaluator. After introductions, a summary of the submittal is made by the Panel's Chairperson to highlight the program's goals and accomplishments and to make certain that the developer and the Panel both understand what exactly is being submitted. This summary is also helpful to visitors who may attend the meetings. After the summary, the Chairperson opens the session for questions from Panel members. The following illustrates the types of questions that might be asked: A member of the Panel might indicate that it is hard to pick up from the submittal the nature of the program activities that would be exported. The Panelist might ask: What did the teacher actually do in the control classroom? What is the instructional materials package that would be exported? These types of questions could be answered best by the program director. The director may spend about five minutes summarizing the instructional procedures and products involved in the program.

Other Panel members may ask questions about the evaluation. The program evaluator usually responds to these questions. One type of question may be a clarification question. Other types of questions may involve the effectiveness of the program at different grade levels; whether the program has achieved results that speak to the sustaining effects question and whether the effects might hold up with other not so similar student populations. At the conclusion of this type of dialog, one of the Panelists may suggest that the data presented are restricted basically to only one type of student population. Both program director and evaluator may wish to respond to this type of observation. It is sometimes helpful to bring back-up data to the meeting which can be drawn upon to amplify data not described fully in the 10-page submittal.

After the Panel members have had a chance to raise their questions, the Chairperson may ask whether the score differences between the treatment and comparison students were large enough to be educationally significant.

The program director may focus attention to a table in the submittal containing the results from administering the primary data collection instrument. The instrument, for example, may have 54 items and a mean score difference between treatment and comparison students on the post-test of 5.96 points. The Chairperson may ask the program evaluator to comment on what a mean difference of 5.96 points truly means in terms of educational significance. The program evaluator might respond by pointing out that such a difference is meaningful, given the fairly small amount of time the treatment students were exposed to the materials and the low cost of materials, or some other related types of valid explanation. This type of dialog may continue for about an hour, or until each Panel member is convinced that the program evidence has or has not supported the claims. The presenters are free to raise questions themselves and/or to present any detail they may feel necessary to help support their claims. The Panel is receptive to colloquium-type discussions. When no additional questions are forthcoming, the Chairperson asks the Panel to vote.

Panel Decisions

At the beginning of the meeting, each Panelist is given a ballot with the program's name and JDRP assigned number on which he or she votes "yes" or "no". Since each member's vote is eventually made public in the Panel's Official Minutes, the ballot contains a place for the name of the Panel member. There is also space on the ballot for comments. The comments may be very helpful to the program director since they point out areas of Panel concern that should be strengthened. After the voting is completed, the Chairperson counts the ballots.

Panel members disqualify themselves from voting on submissions made by programs in which they are directly involved. A simple majority is required for a Panel decision that the evidence of effectiveness is compelling. A tie vote (rare) is considered as being the same as a decision that the evidence is not convincing. The Panel's decision is announced publicly by the Chairperson immediately following the project review.

What About Resubmissions?

Programs not favorably reviewed by the Panel may be resubmitted at any time. The Panel makes every effort to specify weaknesses; it often makes recommendations which could result in a stronger resubmittal. If the program director can satisfactorily revise the submittal to meet the Panel's concerns, then resubmission is advisable. If not, do not resubmit. The Panel itself often recommends resubmission following comments and recommendations on a program's defined deficiencies. Naturally, approval of a resubmittal cannot be guaranteed. The Panel also welcomes resubmissions of programs already approved but which now come with significant improvements, additions or changes.

Records of Panel Meetings

The Minutes from each meeting are normally distributed to the Panel members, developers, and other selected U.S. Department of Education personnel. Copies of the Minutes may be obtained from the JDRP Executive Secretary by other educators, evaluators, and administrators interested in the JDRP review process.

What Happens After Approval?

Once a program has been approved by the JDRP, several events take place. An official letter of congratulations and recognition of program approval is sent to the developer's officials by the Executive Secretary of the JDRP. A letter is also sent by the National Diffusion Network (NDN) notifying the developer's officials that the program is now a part of the NDN, the major dissemination arm of the U.S. Department of Education. The letter also contains a "Welcome Wagon" kit which explains briefly the NDN and the role of the newly approved program as a Developer Demonstrator (DD).

Questions and Answers: JDRP and NDN

The following questions and answers represent common concerns that individuals have raised since the JDRP and NDN began to work. While they are not all inclusive, they do represent the inquiries and experiences of others and may be helpful.

1. How does one distinguish between a State's validation and the JDRP? Does JDRP approval result in automatic funding by the National Diffusion Network?

Ans: State validation and the JDRP are both involved in the review of evidence of effectiveness. The NDN concerns itself in the dissemination/diffusion of approved JDRP programs, products and practices. State validation procedure is a function of the State and is not required by the JDRP.

Some States do require State validation before considering a JDRP submission. Other States permit a program to go directly to the U.S. Department of Education. Approval by the JDRP means that the Department of Education can actively disseminate the project. To receive Federal dissemination funds from the NDN as Developer Demonstrators, those projects that have been approved by the JDRP submit applications for grants to the NDN in periodic competitive funding cycles.

2. Does the Panel take into consideration the type of program represented in the submittal in light of the voids that exist in the kinds of programs represented by the NDN?

Ans: The JDRP will consider any educational program recommended through the pre-review process described previously. For example, products and practices may cover areas from pre-school to adult education and management. The Secretary announces annual funding priorities for the National Diffusion Network through notices which appear in the Federal Register. At the time programs are approved by the JDRP, a copy of the most recent priorities for NDN funding will be included among the "Welcome Wagon" materials.

3. Is a program that is approved by the JDRP authorized to appear in the NDN's catalog, Educational Programs That Work?

Ans: Yes. Only JDRP approved programs may be included in the catalog. However, that does not automatically include NDN funding. Only about 30% of the programs that appear in Educational Programs That Work receive NDN funding for dissemination in any one year. NDN funds, like other Department funds, are provided for in annual appropriations. The level of funds available for dissemination purposes may vary from year to year.

4. Can one predict which seven members of the Panel will show up for any given session?

Ans: No. The JDRP Executive Secretary knows the nature of the submittals before calling together a quorum of seven Panelists. Membership of each Panel is different as their selection is basically rotational. Occasionally some members are selected on the basis of a particular knowledge. For example, a vocational or adult education professional may be on the Panel when these areas are being considered.

5. Is there some way of knowing who is more "stringent" and who is less "stringent" among the members of the Panel and of being able to influence which seven members will make up your quorum ahead of time?

Ans: Certain configurations of the seven Panelists have seemed to be more "stringent" than others. However, the Panel's structure and procedures preclude any outside influence being brought to bear on the composition of a particular quorum. The professional atmosphere, expertness, and "mix" of the quorum has shown its effectiveness in assuring objective decisions. Thus the word and concept "stringent" should not really enter the situation. Panel members' deliberations are based on a strong sense of objectivity and professionalism.

6. If there is a resubmission, are you assured that the Panel will be reconstituted to include the same members who served when the original submittal was reviewed?

Ans: No. However, the program office official, when introducing the program director at the second session of the Panel, is at liberty to say that this is the second time around. The official may wish to highlight the concerns expressed by the first Panel and explain how these concerns were satisfied. The second Panel, which may include a member of or two from the initial group, will consider the earlier Panel's concerns in the context of the resubmittal. In all cases, however, the Panel members are apprised of the earlier considerations and decision before the meeting so that the details may be taken into account for the new decision.

7. Do project staff have any influence over the order in which the submittal is reviewed in a given session of the Panel?

Ans: Normally, a program is scheduled to appear in the order in which the submittal has entered into the system. However, if the program is scheduled to appear last, and the program representatives have a plane flight out of Washington, D.C. at 11:30 that morning, a request to the Panel will usually result in an adjustment being made. The Panel tries to be as flexible as possible.

8. How often does the Panel meet?

Ans: There is no regular schedule. It meets whenever as many as three submittals have been received. The Panel has been known to meet to review just one submittal if others have not been presented for review within a reasonable period of time. The Panel meets about 20 to 25 times a year.

9. Looking at 10 pages of written material and data tables, how do the Panelists know that what they are reading went on in the program? After all, the JDRP does not require State validation in which site visits are made, and the Panel members do not make visits themselves.

Ans: The Panelists rely on the program office transmittal memo, the credibility of the project representatives in that session, and on the persuasiveness of the written submittal. In addition, the Panel relies on the pre-review process within the Department to ensure that the submittal is not only complete but is also an accurate reflection of the program.

10. Is it absolutely necessary for a project to have government funding (State or Federal) before it can be considered by the JDRP?

Ans: No. Any public or nonprofit private agency can make a submittal. Only for-profit organizations are excluded. Many of the 368 JDRP approved programs in the National Diffusion Network were developed with funds other than from the U.S. Department of Education. For example, funds from the National Science Foundation, U. S. Department of Justice, Youth Development Act, and local educational agencies have been used to develop the exemplary programs.

11. Of what benefit is JDRP approval and possible NDN funding to an educational organization particularly, given the possible "loss" of valuable staff persons to dissemination efforts?

Ans: Some very good programs have never gone through the process because of this very issue. However, an educational group will receive national recognition for its efforts and exemplary results and will receive numerous inquiries about the JDRP approved program. This should be realized in advance, and an understanding reached between the developer of the program and the group's administration. Since the school system committed itself to the program and enjoyed the benefits of its results, a positive obligation to share this information with others exists. Traditionally, educators have always sought to find, share or exchange exemplary programs and ways to show others their development. The JDRP process and the NDN provide the means for such sharing to improve education.

12. How does an approved program back out of the NDN if it becomes inundated with requests or its staff becomes committed along the lines of previous questions?

Ans: Very simple. The program's officials do not request funding from the NDN. Only they can determine the extent of their dissemination practices and capabilities.

13. Is there an appeal procedure if the submittal is not approved by the Panel?

Ans: No formal appeals are necessary. The developer can come back as many times as it wants with new data and a resubmission.

14. Does the Panel use an objective rating scale, or does it rely on its professional judgement about the evidence presented?

Ans: The latter. Panelists are asking the question: is the project effective, can it be replicated, does it help students, administrators, teachers, etc.? The Panel reaches a judgement based on the weight of all the evidence presented. If it approves a program, it is saying that the program should be disseminated. It is up to the individual local educator to decide to adopt it and adapt it to the local setting.

15. Does the JDRP expect a developer to document that the program itself was the cause of the principal intended outcomes?

Ans: Yes. The Panel requires that evidence be presented which indicates that it is the program, rather than other external factors, which is producing the beneficial outcomes.

16. Where can I go to get help in putting together my submittal?

Ans: The references listed in the appendix would be very useful, especially the JDRP IDEABOOK and the Guidelines. In addition, programs within the Secretary's List of priorities may receive direct assistance through professional evaluators available through the National Diffusion Network. Some other evaluators are available through individual arrangements. The JDRP's Executive Secretary may also provide help.

17. How soon can a developer find out if the submittal was approved or disapproved for dissemination?

Ans: As soon as the ballots are counted during the Panel's review meeting. The Chairperson will announce the results of the Panel members' votes plus their recommendations to the developers.

18.

What are the chances for Panel approval?

Ans: The answer to the question is really in three parts. First, submittals do not go directly to the JDRP but to a U.S. Department of Education program office pre-review group. This group provides comprehensive technical assistance to the agency which submitted the program. The data from one pre-review group show about 25% of the submittals received are forwarded to the JDRP. Second, the JDRP's figures show about 60 percent of the submittals forwarded by the program office are approved at the initial panel review meeting. Third, about 80 percent of all resubmittals are eventually approved.

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Appendix: SELECTED REFERENCES

- ° U. S. Department of Education Joint Dissemination Review Panel. Pamphlet prepared by the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, San Francisco, California. (Contract #300-77-0415) (not dated). A brochure which provides an overview of the JDRP process and criteria for submission.
- ° U. S. Department of Education. Educational Programs That Work. Ninth Edition, 1983.

This publication, produced initially by the Far West Laboratory, will probably be continued by some private, non-profit educational service. Many agencies reproduce the catalog in whole or in part. Another source for information about NDN programs is the Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC). The Center's complete address is in the succeeding reference. Additional information about NDN programs may be obtained by contacting:

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The National Diffusion Network
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- ° U. S. Office of Education and the National Institute of Education, IDEABOOK: The Joint Dissemination Review Panel, October 1977.

This publication is a result of a contract (number NIE 1A 0 7706) with the RMC Research Corporation, Mountain View, California. It was written by G. Kasten Tallmadge. It illustrates the JDRP's six main concerns governing its decisions and many ways to gather convincing evidence of the effectiveness of educational innovations. It is the official guide for anyone planning evaluation in anticipation of future submission to the JDRP. This publication is available in the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC). Inquiries concerning the availability of ERIC microfiche should be sent directly to ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) Customer Service, P.O. Box 1901, Arlington, Virginia 22210.

- ° Joint Dissemination Review Panel (JDRP): Guidelines, March 2, 1982

An unpublished report used in the U. S. Department of Education by persons working closely with the National Diffusion Network and the Joint Dissemination Review Panel members and by those preparing a submittal. It provides an explanation of why the Panel was established, the general procedures followed

in actually preparing the 10-page submittal, and the details on the criteria used for approval for dissemination. This 21-page duplicated report can be obtained by writing to:

Seymour Rubak
Executive Secretary
Joint Dissemination Review Panel
U.S. Department of Education
Room 615, Brown Building
400 Maryland Ave., S. W.
Washington, D.C. 20202
(202) 653-7006

- ° State Facilitators (see addresses in the catalog: Educational Programs That Work). State Facilitators can identify evaluators in your area who are familiar with the JDRP process, identify resources that may be of help, and answer details about the functions of the various interrelated actions in the National Diffusion Network.
- ° NDN Video Tapes and films.
- 1. Joint Dissemination Review Panel: Selecting Educational Programs That Work, 1980. This recent videotape/film production describes not only what the Panel is, but by actual examples tells of its criteria, its quality control mechanism and procedures, and how it helps to recognize and initiate the transfer of successful education programs from national State, local government and private, non-profit sources elsewhere in the nation. Through actual interviews and excerpts from a Panel meeting, the production helps to fully tell and show the critical role the Panel plays in American education. Its connection with the National Diffusion Network is clearly and well portrayed and detailed. Potential viewers and users of this two part 38 1/2 minute tape are those who either are now planning to submit a program to the Panel or will in the future; professionals in teacher education and administration; teachers; educational evaluators; educational change agents, etc.
- 2. National Diffusion Network: An Overview, 1980. This 37 minute, two part program, graphically and objectively looks at what the National Diffusion Network is, what it does, how it does it, who does what, and with what successes. It is a comprehensive view of the Network's elements - the "Developer Demonstrators" (DDs), its "State Facilitators" (SFs), and the technical assistance contractors. Their role and relationship to the NDN and the Joint Dissemination Review Panel is also clearly presented. Educational professionals at all levels, as well as private, non-profit groups working in education are prime viewers of this videotape/film. It is quite valuable

also to administrators and funding boards who are charged with making decisions about the cost effective educational improvements.

3. National Diffusion Network; Transferring Educational Programs That Work , 1980. This videotape/film shows in an almost documentary way exactly what happens when a school, interested in a program approved by the Joint Dissemination Review Panel, goes about adopting this program through the National Diffusion Network. Needs, problems, resources, false starts and the step by step successes to eventual adoption are all dealt with openly. The 28 1/2 minute production is in two parts for easier presentation. It is valuable for awareness and training sessions, and is of interest to educational administrators, parents, groups teachers, educational change agents, and school board members.

Information concerning availability of these video tapes/films can be obtained by writing to :

National Audio Visual Center
General Service Administration (GSA)
Washington, D.C. 20409